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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025
www.senate.gov/~appropriations

May 4, 2004

The Honorable John W. Warner
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Warner:

The photographic evidence of humiliation of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers, intelligence agents, and civilian contractors has shocked the world. It is imperative that Congress act swiftly to determine the nature and scope of the abuses of prisoners and detainees held by the United States.

I urge you to call open hearings of the Armed Services Committee at the earliest possible date to examine the administration of American-run prisons and detention centers in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations around the world. The time for public hearings is now. Closed-door briefings by military officers are not sufficient to fully investigate and inform the public of the facts and policies that resulted in the abuse of prisoners in U.S. care.

It is vital that the Armed Services Committee hear, in open session, testimony from Secretary Rumsfeld, Director Tenet, and General Myers. Closed sessions may be warranted only if witnesses have specific information to present to the Committee that would endanger ongoing investigations or the administration of justice. In addition, the Committee should seek testimony from outside experts on the laws of war and humanitarian affairs, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, Human Rights Watch, and scholars of international law.

Hearings must not be focused only on the documented abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison. The Committee should examine the administration of all U.S.-run detention facilities that may be related to the war in Iraq or the war on terrorism. Further, it is essential that there be a public airing of views on the requirements of the Geneva Convention, the interrogation of detainees, and the relationship between military authorities, intelligence officials, and civilian contractors.

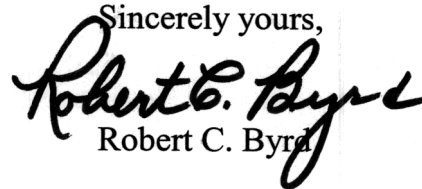
While the Committee is now engaged in markup of the Fiscal Year 2005 Defense

The Honorable John W. Warner
May 4, 2004
Page 2

Authorization bill, it is important that hearings be conducted as soon as possible so that Senators may consider amendments to address the serious problems that led to the unconscionable treatment of Iraqi prisoners, and prevent more possible abuses in other detention facilities.

For the sake of all of our troops who are now serving our country with honor and distinction, and to repair the considerable damage to the reputation of the United States in the international community, I urge you to hold prompt and open hearings of the Armed Services Committee to investigate the administration of prisons and detention facilities in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

Robert C. Byrd

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